SERMON

ON

BAPTISM,

Preached at Rockland on the 20th June, 1890, by

REV. JAS. HORSBURGH BEATT,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Cumberland and Rockland, Ont.

OTTAWA:
Printed by A. S. WOODBURN, Elgin St.
1891.

Thoburn Collection
app. 1914

SERMON

ON

BAPTISM,

Preached at Rockland on the 20th June, 1890, by

REV. JAS. HORSBURGH BEATT,

Pastor of the Presbyterian Church, Cumberland and Rockland, Ont.

OTTAWA:
Printed by A. S. WOODBURN, Elgin St.
1891.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THE following discourse was preached for the purpose of allowing the young converts in Rockland intelligently to choose which of the two branches of the Christian Church there, the Baptist or the Presbyterian, they should join as members.

Notice was given to this effect on the previous Sabbath, as there were some young people who professed to have been converted at our recent meetings, when the Rev. Wm. Meikle, the evangelist, was among us.

After the delivery of the sermon Mr. Beatt was requested to allow it to be printed for private circulation, and, having consented to do this, he set about at once to prepare it for the press. As, however, it wa. preached from notes, it took much longer time to get it ready than he had anticipated. In the meantime, too, impaired health prevented his doing much beyond the necessary work incident to so large a field as he has under his charge. Although late he gives it to his friends with the hope that it will put their minds forever at rest as to this question which has for a number of years sorely vexed many in this district, and has led not a few to change from once Christian church to another.

SERMON.

Dear Christian Friends:

As announced last Sabbath, I intend to draw your attention to-day to the subject of Christian Baptism, not for the sake of trying to draw our Baptist friends into our church, but simply for the purpose of explaining the position of our Presbyterian Church to those who profess to have been converted in our recent meetings, and who may be wishing to connect themselves with one of the branches of the Christian Church. We believe that our position is in true accord with the teaching of Scripture, and this I hope to make clear to all as I proceed.

The subject divides itself into two parts, or rather is so divided for us by our Baptist friends themselves, as they object both to our mode of Baptism and to our practice of baptising children. Let us then try to find out the Scriptural teaching on these points, and may God Himself illumine the page for our edification.

I.—THE MODE OF BAPTISM.

And here the first passage that presents itself for our consideration is in Matthew III, 13-17. Here we have the account of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. In the 16th verse Jesus is said to come up out of the water, and it is argued by our Baptist friends that He must have been in the water ere He could have come out of it, and there was no need of His being in the water unless He was dipped. There is no evidence, however, of His even being in the water. A reference to the original Greek brings this out clearly. The words are apo tou hudatos (*ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος*) and they are only correctly rendered by "from the water," and this is the rendering given in the Revised Version of the Testament.

This Baptism was the dedication of Jesus to His work of High Priest, and was equivalent to anointing Him to the office. Aaron and his sons were anointed by the pouring of oil on their heads (Leviticus VIII), and this was symbolical of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Mosaic Dispensation. In the Christian Dispensation, however, we find water is used instead of oil for this same purpose. This is clearly seen when Peter asked for water in the house of Cornelius. The Holy Ghost had already fallen on his hearers, and he could see no reason why the outward sign should be withheld.

Jesus is called Messiah and Christ, and these titles help us here. Messiah is the Hebrew word for Anointed, and Christ is the Greek. He is therefore the Anointed One. But we have no account of the

anointing of Jesus, save at this time when John baptised him, and the Holy Ghost descended like a dove upon Him. If then this is the anointing of Jesus to His office of High Priest, we feel quite safe in affirming that as the oil was poured on the head of Aaron and his sons when they were dedicated to their office, so the water was poured on the head of Jesus at this time by John. Besides what representation of the out-pouring of the Spirit is the dipping of the body into the water. If the one is the sign of the other we would naturally look for a similarity in the application. There are six pictures extant representing the scene of this baptism of Jesus by John,—one is as early as the 2nd century, and the latest belongs to the 7th century,—but they all represent John pouring water on the head of Jesus from a shell.

Much is made of the meaning of the word Baptise by our friends. They say it means to dip, and so for we agree, but we differ in saying that that is its only meaning. Here are all the meanings given in Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon: to dip repeatedly, to dip under, to bathe, to steep, to wet, to be soaked in wine, to be over head and ears in debt, to overwhelm one by asking questions, to pour upon, to drench, to dip a vessel, to draw water, to baptise. Leaving these before you let us see how the word is used in the language.

In Daniel IV, 33, we read that his body was wet with the dew of heaven. Now the words "was wet" is the translation of the Greek ebaphe (ἐβάφη), and is literally was baptised with the dew; that is the dew descended on his body. It certainly does not imply that his body was dipped into the dew.

Homer, the great Greek epic poet, says in his Battle of the Frogs and Mice, lines 218-219: "But yet he did not withdraw from the conflict, but smote him and down he fell, and the marsh was sprent with gore." The words "was sprent" are really "was baptised."* The marsh was baptised with the blood of a mouse, and surely that does not suggest that it was dipped into the blood.

In translating the Greek Testament into Latin, the word baptise was taken into the language just as it was without change, although they had the very word already in their language which our Baptist friends are so fond of now. The word "immerse" comes from the Latin verb "immergo," and it means to plunge into. To baptise according to the literal meaning of this word, would be a dangerous thing as it would leave the person under the water. They require another verb "emergo," to bring the person up again. Now "immerse" is never used in the Latin Bible for "baptise," and all Latin writers follow this example.

So much now for the meaning of the word by itself. Let us see how it is used in connection with our subject. When it is followed by the words "with water," "with the Holy Spirit and with fire," the construc-

---

* *ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὥς ἀπέληγε μάχης, ἀλλ' ἤλασεν αὐτόν*
χάπτεσε δ'οὐδ' ἀνένευσεν, ἐβάπτετο δ'αἵματι λίμνη πορφυρέῳ.

tion always is the verb precedes the preposition en (ἐν) with the dative of the noun. Matthew III, 11, John the Baptist says, "I indeed baptise you with water, but He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Greek, Baptizo en hudati, Baptisei en Pneumati Hagio kai puri, (*Βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι, Βαπτίσει ἐν Πνεύματι Ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί.*

This passage clearly teaches that as the one is used so ought the other to be. If the one is to be understood dipped into the water so surely the other must be dipped into the Holy Ghost and into fire. But the Holy Ghost is always spoken of in Scripture as being poured out. Acts II,17-18, "I will pour out my Spirit," which passage is a quotation from Joel II, 28-29. Surely then, it is reasonable to say the least of it, if we hold that we may pour on water in baptism.

But this construction in Greek always denotes the instrument we use in doing a thing. Here are a few examples :—

Daniel IV, 27—"Break off thy sins by righteousness and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor." Now in the Greek Bible the words "by righteousness and by shewing,etc.," are rendered by the preposition en (ἐν) with the dative, as they are the instruments.

Matthew IX, 34—He casteth out devils through the prince of the devils. "Through" in Greek is en with the dative.

John XIII, 35—By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples. "By" is en with the dative.

Acts XVII, 31—He shall judge the world in righteousness by that man, etc. "By" is en with the dative.

James III, 9—Therewith bless we God, etc. The word therewith is just another form of "with this," and the Greek is en with the dative.

Revelation XIII, 10—He that killeth with the sword, etc. Here again "with" is en with the dative.

Many other passages could be produced from Greek writers, but surely these are enough to prove that "en" with the dative denotes the instrument by or with which a thing is done. Now if water is the instrument in baptism it must be applied to the body, not the body to the water. And that this is so seems to me perfectly clear from the expressions used ; thus we infer that baptism is properly performed by pouring water from the hand on the head.

But the verb baptise is used in other relations than those given above. As for example in the following passages :—

Romans VI, 3—"That so many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death."

Galatians III, 27—"For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ."

1 Corinthians, X, 2—"Were all baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

In these passages eis (εἰς) is used with the accusative, thus showing most conclusively that had it been "baptism into water" this form of construction would have been used.

Enough has been said as to the meaning of the word, let me now come to other arguments.

When Peter had preached before Cornelius and found that the Holy Ghost had descended on his hearers he asked (Acts x, 47), "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptised who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" This question seems to us to suggest the bringing of a quantity of water into the place where the people were gathered, rather than the going of the people to a bath or a river. And I feel certain that all unprejudiced persons would allow this, and morever, no one would expect the quantity brought to be sufficient for dipping all the company one after another.

The moral side of the question is a grave one, and one not easily set aside in my estimation. To be dipped would necessitate the laying aside of the greater portion of their garments which would not be in all countries a seemly thing. The scenes at river sides and church fonts are eloquent enough to reverent onlookers that Christ never meant this mode of baptism to be the mode of performing the rite in His church.

Besides these things it is a burden grievous to be borne. Not everyone has the physical courage to face such an ordeal. Jesus made all the rites in connection with the Christian Church of the simplest character possible. Rites and ceremonies had been found too heavy for the Jews, and they have passed away. Jesus desires his people to give Him Spirit worship, hence the form of worship is so simplified that externals are all but abolished.

This immersion too takes away from the grand universality of the Gospel. It is the boast of the Gospel that it is for every nation and race. Jesus has sent it into all the world. But if everyone must be immersed ere they can become true Christians, then the Gospel is no longer universally applicable to the human race. The sick cannot be immersed, but a little water could be poured on the head without danger. In ice-bound countries immersion either becomes very difficult or dangerous to life. And instances are not wanting where death has ensued in a few days, simply because the person was not in a fit condition for the ordeal.

Immersion has very much the appearance of a penance. It looks like an affliction of the body in order to wash the soul. And I feel sure from what I have seen that many glory in it as something done by the person in securing salvation.

II.—THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

Our Church holds that those who are to be baptised are those adults who accept the Gospel for the first time, it unbaptised in infancy, and the children of professing Christians. And we believe that we are warranted in this both from the teaching of Scripture and from the practice of the apostles which we find endorsed by the practice of the early Christian Church.

(*a*) The teaching of Scripture.

Circumcision was applied to children on account of the faith of the parent. This was a spiritual rite, not a civil one. This is clearly seen from the reasoning of Paul (Romans IV) in connection with this subject. He declares that Abraham received the rite as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while he was yet uncircumcised. And it was applied to Isaac on account of the faith of Abraham. It was thus the initial rite into the Jewish Church. Foreigners wishing to enter the Jewish Church had to be circumcised and their children along with them. This is just the position we give baptism in our church. It is the rite of admission, and surely there is no more absurdity in a Christian parent getting baptism for his child than for Abraham getting circumcision for Isaac. Baptists see this and to get rid of this difficulty they refuse to recognise a Church of God as existing till the time of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost after the ascension of the Lord. The Jewish Church may never, perhaps, in so many words be called the Church of God, but surely the whole strain of Holy Writ points in this direction. Not only were the Jews chosen as God's peculiar people, but they were expected as a body to "worship Jehovah." The Psalmist speaks often of the "assembly of the saints," and the "congregation of the saints." They were, too, expected to do what God's Church now is expected to do, to show forth "salvation from day to day." Even before the deluge we find the sons of God are mentioned as distinct from the sons of men, and this would imply a separation even then into a Church of God. A church is simply an assembly for worship.

It appears perfectly plain that a very close relationship exists between the Mosaic and Christian dispensations. The epistle to the Hebrews was meant to show how Christianity was only Judaism stripped of its externals. But even without this epistle the student of Scripture cannot fail to see that Christianity is but Judaism simplified and made universal. The ten commandments of the moral law which was given to the Jews at the commencement of the Mosaic Dispensation are not abolished by Jesus, but are included in every particular in His more universal commands of love to God and men. The Lord's Supper sprang as all will allow out of the great Feast of the Passover. Is it any wonder then that we say baptism has been substituted for circumcision in accordance with our Lord's command?

The command of Jesus to His disciples (Matthew XXVIII, 19) should read "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations by baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and by teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This puts baptising and teaching on the same footing, and both are means by which disciples are to be made to Christianity. Dr. H. Martensen says in connection with this that the more infant baptism prevails in the world the more are the words of the Lord fulfilled that the nations should be made disciples by baptism and teaching.

In Christ's words (Mark x, 14) "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God," we have very plain teaching that children form part of the invisible Church of Christ. And this part must be no insignificant part considering the well known fact that one half of the human race die in infancy. But some say that Jesus only means to tell us here that we must be like children in order to enter the kingdom. This I deny, for he draws this very inference in the very next verse, "Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." No! It seems very plain that Jesus meant to teach that children were actually in the kingdom. Indeed these words would lose all their sweetness if they were only meant to say that Jesus wanted to embrace the children because they were like His people. But if Jesus meant to say that the little ones are members of the invisible church what are we that we should refuse to acknowledge them as part of His church below? This relationship, too, in the church is an endearing link in the chain of affection between parents and children—they are knit together in the Lord. It is true that we do not admit the children to the full privileges of members till they can understand all they do, but whenever they do this, endorsing, so to speak, the act of their parent in giving them to the Lord in baptism, they willingly allow them to take their place in all the affairs of the church.

(*b*) The practice of the Apostles.

This is necessarily very scant as they were practically preaching a new religion both to Jew and Greek. On this account the great bulk of their converts to be baptised would be adults, just as it is in heathen lands now. But we find that on several occasions whole households were baptised, and this in ordinary speech suggests children as forming part of the household. Baptists, however, refuse to allow this in connection with baptism, as, of course, this would destroy their position altogether. It is, however, as gratuitous on their part to assert there were no children in these households as it is on our part to assert that there were; both assertions are mere conjectures so far as the known facts are concerned. Hence our position is as good as theirs. But when we know that the mention of a household would suggest children to most people, then our position, we think, is strengthened. Then again we must remember that the apostles and most of the preachers were Jews, and they were familiar with the law in reference to the admitting of proselytes into Judaism, that the children were accepted with the parents. Hence we think our position unassailable. Paul when speaking (1 Corinthians VII, 14) of the parents not both being believers says that the one is sanctified by the other "else were the children unclean, but now are they holy," clearly teaching that if one parent only is a believer the children are reckoned within the pale of the church, and are separated as holy to the Lord. It is on this account that we baptise the children if one of the parents is a professed Christian, irrespective of the profession of the other. This to me is a very strong proof that the children were baptised with the parents.

(*c*) The endorsing practice of the early Christian Church.

Justin Martyr, born near the close of the 1st century, says when speaking of those who were members of the Church, that a part of them were 60 or 70 years old, and they had been made disciples in infancy.

Clemens Alexandrinus, born about the middle of the 2nd century, when reproving Christians for using idolatrous and indecent pictures, exhorts them to use only those that were becoming and useful, and particularly does he exhort fishermen to choose the image of an apostle baptising infants.

Iraeneus, born about 97 A.D., was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John. He says, Christ came to save all who by Him are born again into God—infants and little ones, and children and youths and olders persons.* And he explains that born again means baptism.

Neander says in reference to this passage (Kirchengesel, vol. 1, p. 537), Thus from this idea which lay deep in the essence of Christianity and ruled all minds, proceeded the practice of infant baptism.

Tertullian, born about 97 A.D., says in his treatise on baptism (chap. 18), "The delay of baptism is more useful according to every person's disposition, but especially with regard to children." He urges delay as their faith is not complete. Here he takes exactly the position of our Baptist friends, and he does so in opposition to the practice of the Church at that early date. He, in fact, begins the heresy.

Origen, born about 184 A.D., tells us that infants are baptised for the remission of sins. The Church hath received the tradition from the apostles that baptism ought to be administered to infants.

Cyprian, a co-temporary of Origen, tells in his account of the Council of Carthage (chap 11.), that the bishops had the question referred to them whether infants might be baptised before they were eight days old; and they decided unanimously that no infant is to be prohibited from the benefits of baptism although but just born. The passage is an interesting one, and for the benefit of those who may desire to have it I give it below.†

Augustine in his treatise on Faith, Hope and Charity (chap. XIV) says, "If therefore we are hence shown to be dead in sin in that we have been baptised in the death of Christ, assuredly little children also

---

* Adv. Naer III, 22—Omnes eum per semetipsum venit salvare omnes, inquam, qui per eum renascuntur in Deum, infantes et parvulos et pueros, et juvenes et seniores. Ideo per omnem venit aetatem et infantibus infans factus sanctificans infantes, in parvulis parvulus sanctificans hanc ipsam habentes aetatem simul et exemplum illis pietatis effectus et justitiae et subjectionis in juventibus juvenis exemplum juvenibus fiens et sanctificans Domino.

† Quantum vero ad causum infantium pertinet, quod dixisti intra secundum vel tertium diem quo nati sint constitutos baptizari non oportere, et considerandem esse legem (Genesis XVII, 12) circumcisionis antiquae, ut intra octavum diem eum qui natus est baptizandum et santificandum non putares, longe aliud in concilio nostro omnibus visum est. In hoe enim quod tu putabas esse faciendum nemo consensit sed universi potius judicavimus nulli homini nato misericordiam Dei et gratiam denegandam.

who are baptized in Christ die unto sin, because they are baptized in His death." "Therefore to them who have been baptized in the death of Christ in which not only older persons but little children also are baptised, he says, so do ye also, that is, in like manner as Christ, so do ye also judge yourselves to have died unto sin, but to live unto God in Christ Jesus."

Baptists are very fond of asserting that infant baptism was only introduced about the 3rd century and the Church was becoming corrupt by that time. But all the authorities above quoted, save Augustine, lived before the 3rd century, and their testimony is unquestionably on the side of infant baptism as the universal practice of the church in their time: And as this time was so close to the time of the apostles we hold that their practice was more likely than not to be similar to the apostles. At that early age heresies were not wanting we know, but they were chiefly philosophical quibblings, not great changes in practical work. They were more concerned with solving the mystery of the nature of Christ, etc., than with introducing new practices into the Christian Church.

The present Anabaptist sect began during the time of the Reformation. They opposed the greater part of the Reformers in regard to this doctrine of infant baptism, holding it to be one of the errors of the Romish Church which ought to be rejected; and ever since they have had their followers.

Were Baptists content, as most are in Britain, to hold their views without refusing brotherly fellowship to other branches of the Christian Church who believe in infant baptism by pouring or sprinkling, then I for one would never say one word against them. I have had sweet fellowship with Baptist friends at the Lord's Table, and were it so here in Canada I would never enter into debate with them, although all the same I hold that our doctrine and practice is the only Scriptural and therefore right one.

To my Baptist friends around me I earnestly entreat them to beware lest they be found adding to God's Word to their condemnation. Many refuse to recognise any as Christians unless they have been immersed, and all refuse to sit at the Lord's Table with such unbaptised ones; and it is this arrogance of spiritual pride that rouses the righteous indignation of those who feel that God has accepted them whatever man may do. Indeed this making of immersion as a necessity to Christian fellowship is putting the sign into such prominence that it is practically making it of as much importance as the whole work of God in the matter of salvation, and this is most blasphemous. A sign is usually a thing of small importance. The Lord's Supper is a supper, but no one, not even a Baptist, thinks it necessary to take a hearty meal in order to truly keep it, for the obvious reason that it is a feast to the soul not to the body. Hence it is enough to taste the bread and wine. Paul thought the rite of baptism of small importance, for when enumerating

the instances in which he performed the ceremony, he says he was not sent to baptise but to preach. Let, then, our Baptist friends beware lest some of Christ's denunciations of the Pharisees be not equally applicable to them for straining out gnats and swallowing camels. Let us keep signs in their subordinate position and look more for the marks of Divine acceptance. God seems to accept and bless the labors of other branches of the Christian Church besides the Baptist, and those outnumber these by ten to one.